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THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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The Indian Church at Worship

T. S. GARRETT

In the year 1932 Bishop Azariah of Dornakal, with the approval of the Episcopal Synod of his Church, published in Telugu a marriage service for use in his diocese. In it the essential Christian act of solemnization of matrimony was enriched with local marriage customs from non-Christian sources, where these were considered free from idolatrous associations. Demands that worship in India and other countries should be less foreign and more 'indigenous' were then of comparatively recent origin, and judging by the comment made on this service by the Episcopal Synod,¹ it was evidently hailed as a bold and enlightened step in the right direction.

It was particularly valuable and indeed urgent to begin this Indianization at the point of marriage. The dramatic poverty of our marriage services of Western origin constitutes in itself an additional temptation to those already tempted to contract mixed marriages by non-Christian rites. Perhaps even more cogent to Christians is the immensely powerful dramatic emphasis in Hindu marriage ceremonies on the binding and life-long character of the marriage vows. The tying together of the bride's and bridegroom's clothes, the binding together of their hands, the exchange of garlands, the seven steps walked together and the vow of which the sacredness is enhanced by its being made in the presence of fire—all these are a colourful Indian heritage. In view of the fact that marriage was a divine ordinance 'in the beginning' and Christ only endorsed what was already part of the basic structure of society, the Christian need have no hesitation in 'baptizing' this heritage to be part of the marriage rites of the Church.

Such may well have been the hopes entertained of this service; but 19 years later, when enquiry was made about its use, the reply received from Bishop Azariah's successor was: 'Apparently only lip-service was paid in the matter of the use of this service. I can find little trace of its being used except occasionally in Dornakal itself'.² Such was the fate of a hopeful experiment, even though backed by the authority and forcefulness of that great bishop. It is not surprising that other experiments of this nature have come up against apathy and conservatism and

¹ See *Principles of Prayer Book Revision* (S.P.C.K.), pp. 78f.

² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

met either with failure or only very limited success. With regard to marriage the best we can do to console ourselves is to reflect that the use in many parts of India of the *mangalasutra* instead of the Western ring is a purely Indian custom. Here local tradition has gloriously triumphed. The Liturgy Committee of the Church of South India is at present engaged in examining existing marriage rites with a view to producing a C.S.I. rite or rites which will embody the principles which Bishop Azariah had in mind. Perhaps today with the growing consciousness that the Church in India should give expression to its own heritage, the new experiment will be better received than that of a generation ago.

This instance we have described as typical of the reception with which Indianizing of worship is inclined to meet must prompt us to reflect and to examine what it is we aim at doing when we set before ourselves the project of making Indian Christian worship 'more Indian'. The creed in which we express our belief in 'the holy catholic Church' should remind us in our worship of Paul's great affirmation that 'there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all in all'. The Indian Church, therefore, can never be merely Indian: its members are heirs of the universal Church throughout the ages whose heritage of worship we have been studying. The creative periods in worship, both that of the early centuries and that of the Reformation, had their main centres in other lands and their fruits have been brought to India by foreigners. Christians in India need not be embarrassed by this: it is part of their universal fellowship in Christ.

At the same time, as Dr. Sundkler in his book, *The Church of South India*, has pointed out, a law of the science of botany has its analogy in the subject we are studying: 'transplantation' has brought about a measure of 'mutation'. We see this in the worship of the Christians of St. Thomas. They call themselves and are known by others as 'Syrians', and this is a recognition of the fact of their ancient connexions with the Churches of East and West Syria. In worship their rites have been imported from these regions; and yet when planted and rooted in India they have undergone some independent development, and Indian Christians have through the ages given to them a character which they can call their own.

The new formulations of worship which had their births at the Reformation have been brought to India by evangelists of many different denominations and often present a confused scene. They are of more recent transplantation and bear in a more marked degree the characteristics of the countries of their origin. Also when the pioneer missionaries of these churches came to India, it was hardly to be expected that the simple, illiterate folk who formed the majority of their converts should make very much contribution of their own to the development of Christian worship. Nor did the missionaries themselves know enough

about Indian art and culture, Indian social and religious customs to be able to distil from them elements that could enrich the Church's heritage of worship. They were inclined to dismiss all these as belonging to the darkness of pagan superstition and therefore to be wholly abandoned at the renunciation by the convert in Baptism of the devil and all his works. Converts, too, were sincere in their desire to imitate in all things their fathers-in-God who had brought them from darkness to light. Hence the prevalence of Western forms of worship in our services, of Western architecture in our churches and, in spite of many hopeful developments in Indian church music, the prevalence in many congregations of translations of Western hymns in Western metre and set to Western hymn-tunes.

We must not go to the extreme of saying that this is all wrong. As we have already affirmed, the Church transcends national boundaries, and to use, for instance, a Hindi translation of a Lutheran or Anglican prayer book enables the Hindi-speaking Christian to enter in a measure into its supranational heritage. Even the revised eucharistic rites of the Lutherans, the Anglicans and the Church of South India have only been 'Indianized' to the extent of including some elements from the Syrian rites. The specifically Indian contribution to their wording and structure is very small, though the significance of these three largely independent revisions, as having with remarkable accord returned to the Church's classical heritage in worship, may be very great in the future. We must not fail to mention the 'Indian Liturgy' of the C.I.P.B.C. which is more thoroughgoing in its return to the Syrian heritage both in wording and in the use of Syrian chants. But this liturgy is only used in a few Marathi and Malayalam speaking congregations, and when we reflect that the Liturgy of St. James is a comparatively recent importation into India, we must admit that the use of passages from it can hardly claim to be more Indian than the continued use of Anglican or Lutheran prayer books.

Similarly a case could be made for Western types of church architecture as better suited than that of Hindu temples or Muslim mosques to the essentially congregational character of Christian worship. Above all one would not wish to deprive the Indian Church entirely of the universal heritage of Western hymnody. Nor can it be said that a congregation which follows in the main a Western mode of worship merely imitates the West. As with the ancient Indian Syrian tradition, protestant Christians in India have succeeded in giving to their more recently imported ways of worship a stamp of their own. Transplantation has indeed engendered mutation.

At the same time, we dare not be complacent and say that all is right. Worship, it has become a commonplace to say, must be related to the whole of life. Can we claim that Indian Christian worship, as it is at present conducted in most churches, is calculated to bring the treasures of Indian common life to the throne

of grace ? The vision of the glory of the nations being brought as tribute to Christ in his Kingdom must be our primary inspiration in seeking to make our worship a fitting expression of India's heritage. No less a reason will suffice. But a further consideration can only come second to this in importance. It is one of a more practical nature connected with the outreach of the Church's mission. What, we must ask, is the evangelistic value of our present ways of worship ? To say that the normal worship of the Church is for instructed Christians and that it does not matter if a Hindu thinks it strange or foreign is not enough. The new convert, when he comes to church for the first time, will inevitably find some things strange and new to him ; but in the main he ought to feel that the service in which he is taking part is something which could soon belong to him and to which he could soon belong. Can this be said of many of our Christian services ? If not, the value of all efforts to make the Indian Church's worship more Indian cannot be overstressed.

Let us start with music and poetry. Though translations of Western hymns have often been the foundation of an Indian Christian's personal devotion, the Westerner who hears them sung in church seldom feels that the singing of choir or congregation has come alive partly, no doubt, because the words of most Indian languages do not fit easily into Western metre. It is significant, too, that hardly any new compositions in this mode, or even good translations, have been produced by Indians themselves. No wonder, if it means, as it often does, murdering their own language to produce them ! For a congregation to rely entirely on Western hymns is to live on borrowed capital and to prefer foreign slavery to native freedom.

The spirit, on the other hand, in which lyrics are sung to Indian music is entirely different. There can be no question that this singing is alive. And, more hopeful still, it is a heritage which is ever increasing. Never a Christmas passes without a new lyrical carol being composed, and if a lyric is required for worship on some special occasion, there is always a poet to write it and a musician to give it a tune. Indeed the compositions in our standard lyric books are only a tenth of this magnificent heritage of Christian folk-song, as those who have used the Rev. John Samuel's Tamil *Manuscript Songs* will know. To every new edition which he brings out he has to add ones recently composed or discovered. When also will our congregations of Anglican heritage realize that their painful efforts to fit their Psalms and Canticles to Western chants for which their language is unsuited are quite unnecessary when these Psalms and Canticles are so much better sung in lyrical versions to Indian music ?

Together with these lyrics which are sung in our services we must class the less formal sacred concert (*kalaksheba* or *bajna*) which is one of the best methods of educating our village congregations in the great themes and personalities of the Bible and is still more powerful as 'lyrical evangelism'. Perhaps the

Church in Andhra, where the people are gifted with a musical talent above that of many other areas, may claim to have advanced furthest in the use of their own Telugu poetry and Carnatic music, particularly at the great Christian conventions which take place in the month of May. In passing we may say that there is nothing more characteristic of India's religious pilgrimage than the *mela* or *jatra* and no Christian enterprise in this mode of assembly is more lastingly popular. In Palamcottah, Tirunelveli District, an occasion of this type was started over half a century ago by missionaries as a counter-attraction in the month of July to a popular Hindu festival. It is still celebrated with the same enthusiasm and to attend it is to meet the rural Church in all its vigour.

Western rites, too, can be given a more Indian form by the use of Indian music for versicles and responses, by singing lyrical versions of confessions, thanksgivings, the creed and the Lord's prayer and by chanting lessons and prayers in the way that the *Vedas* are chanted. At Tamilnad Theological College we have experimented with this way of rendering Morning and Evening Prayer and with Carnatic settings to the congregational parts of the C.S.I. *Order for the Lord's Supper*. In the C.S.I. diocese of Jaffna they have been more ambitious and have set the whole eucharistic service to Carnatic *ragas*, the celebrant chanting the prayers, the readers chanting the lessons, the deacon the litany and the people singing the lyrical versions of their parts from the *gloria in excelsis* onwards. To hear a recording of this was an inspiration: to be present at it must be bliss. It deserves the attention of the Church throughout India.

Experiments in the use of Indian architectural themes in churches have been fewer; though many recent buildings have to a greater or lesser extent embodied some features of local architecture and carving. Bishop Azariah's inspired blending of architectural styles at Dornakal is an outstanding example to be followed (according to the spirit rather than the letter). Together with its Indo-saracenic dome and other features of Muslim architecture it has Dravidian pillars with their datura leaf-banana bud capitals—an effective symbolism of life out of death. Over all are a structure and proportions reminiscent of the renaissance architecture of St. George's Cathedral, Madras; so that in this splendid church East meets West. The use of the Indo-saracenic style might not be so well in place anywhere less close to a Muslim centre like Hyderabad; just as Dravidian pillars would not be appropriate to Delhi or Agra. The great buildings of St. John's College, Agra, including the chapel, are rightly of pure Indo-saracenic and might have been transported from Fatehpur Sikri, except for the cross that surmounts the main dome.

On the other hand, the chapel of the Christu-kula Ashram, Tirupathur, is equally appropriate to its surroundings in its pure Dravidian, indistinguishable from the architecture of a South Indian Hindu temple, until you get near enough to see that all

the symbolism is emphatically Christian. A less ambitious instance of an experiment in combining the two great architectural styles of India is worth recording, particularly as the village of Oyyangudi, where the building in question is situated, is somewhat off the beaten track in Tinnevely District and not likely to be visited by many sightseers. In 1939 the Christian congregation there had collected enough money to build themselves a larger church and came to the Rev. G. E. Hubbard, an ordained architect who was then in charge of the Art Industrial School, Nazareth, with a request for a design for the new church. He firmly refused to design them one in pseudo-Gothic which was what they had in mind, but persuaded them to accept a design which, though not Gothic, would satisfy the conservative villager by conforming to his notion of what a church should look like. The result was a building of the general shape and plan which we expect to find in a church, a shape which has been hallowed by centuries of use in Christian worship. This traditional appearance was enhanced by the retention of the fine tower of the old church the design of which had been inspired by the tower of some English parish church. But though the windows and interior arches were pointed, as in Gothic, anyone who knew anything about architecture would recognize them as inspired by the Indo-saracenic form. And they were set on sturdy Dravidian pillars of single stone blocks carved with Christian symbols. This blending of the styles has a felicity and inspiration of its own; but except where Mr. Hubbard himself was given the opportunity of experimenting in school and college chapels, his line of architectural development has not been followed in the locality. Another instance, we may say, of hide-bound conservatism such as Bishop Azariah's marriage service came up against. It is only fair to add that the bishop's architectural vision in Dornakal cathedral has inspired some imitation in neighbouring village churches.

And may we plead that church furnishings should not be imported or copied from the West, but that Indian types of lamps for instance, should be used instead of Western candlesticks? And should not we insist on the ancient oriental symbol of reverence, the removing of shoes before entering church? Should we not refuse also to allow our churches to be cluttered with ugly pews? To sit cross-legged on the floor is a posture which inspires greater reverence, as those who are accustomed to it well know. After what we have already remarked about music it goes without saying that the harmonium is an abomination. Let us have drums, cymbals and *vinas* to accompany our lyrics. The opportunities for vulgarity which the increasing supply of electricity has afforded—coloured lights over holy table and font etc.—bring a grave danger of disfigurement to our churches. Let all things be done decently and in order.

We have already mentioned the Christian *jatra* as characteristically Indian. It is worth specifying two particular forms of it which generally have a more local character in their celebration

Firstly there is the home festival with its procession of prayer at every house and its lamp lighting ceremony with the accompanying promise of faithfulness to marriage vows and mutual love in the home. This surely meets a need in India's society and the Church's contribution to it in an age when the whole structure of family life is undergoing transformation at the impact of modern technological developments. Finally there is the long established and ever popular harvest festival which gives expression to what is common to all Indian devotion, Christian and non-Christian, the desire to offer the fruits of the earth to God. No one who has attended a village harvest festival can say that the Church in India has not made a significant contribution to world-wide worship here. In the long processions of men, women and children bringing up their baskets of grain and fruit, their chickens and their goats, we see a symbol of the end of all true worship, the offering of man's daily life and its products to God that he may sanctify them for the fulfilment of his purpose of the salvation of mankind.



The determining faith with which the Christian approaches any truth is the faith that Jesus Christ is the fullness of light. This is not a claim that the Christian makes on behalf of Jesus, it is a claim which he himself made. He called himself 'the light of life'. So that in Christ's presence everything is seen clearly and in its right proportions and relations. In the presence of light, only darkness melts away, everything else remains.



Through long ages religion has been man's attempt to question the Universe and wrest an answer from it as to its meaning: God was asked to justify Himself before man, his needs, his problems, his desires, his standards; and in the result men have either shaped God in their own likeness, that is to suit their prejudices; or they have denied God's relevance and even His existence. When you study the Christian faith, however, you will find that basically the position is reversed. It is man who has to justify himself before God and His purposes and His standards. The meaning of man's life is not in himself, man is made for God; and men achieve their true destiny when they fulfil God's purpose for them. Jesus is the revelation of God's purpose. In him God confronts man and challenges him. . . He is the standard both of goodness, and of truth.

The Indian Church and Village Problems

S. P. RAJU

India's village problems in the context of the Indian Church present two aspects: one, the fundamental and theological, and the other, the practical and technological. It goes without saying that the practical and technological approach of the Church to village problems is largely determined by the strength of the Church's conviction in its fundamental approach to the theological basis of village problems.

In discussing the attitude or responsibility of the Church to village problems the biggest question therefore is: Does the Church in India—or more correctly I should say—Do the Churches in India believe that the glaring problems of village poverty, caused by unscientific agricultural practices, inefficient tools and methods used in occupational crafts, uneconomic utilization of the little money villagers have for want of co-operative effort, and a number of other so-called 'secular' problems, come under the 'spiritual' content of Christian theology? Or are these problems of 'secular work', economic rehabilitation, hygienic housing and other similar problems only marginal to, or outside the pale of the doctrine of redemption? Is redemption confined only to the soul?

KERYGMA OR SOUL EVANGELISM

The Church with its over-emphasis on *Evangelism* has placed *Kerygma*, *spiritual evangelism*, or the proclamation of the gospel of redemption of the soul from sin in the forefront of its missionary programme. *Medical evangelism*, or redemption of the body from disease, seems to come next as a handmaid. *Educational evangelism*, or redemption of the mind from ignorance, comes next. The question now is: Does the Church recognize *Economic Evangelism*, which proclaims the gospel of redemption from poverty to them that are poor in physical needs of life, deliverance to them that are captives of want, and liberty to them that are crushed under the tyranny of an unjust economic social order?

The Church, or the Church's theology, divides life into two compartments and even grades them as the *sacred* and the

secular, or the *spiritual* and the *temporal*. The spiritual and the sacred are considered as primary, and the temporal and the secular as secondary. The logical consequence of this doctrine is that there are *sacred occupations* in life that are of a higher order, as against the *secular occupations* that are of a subsidiary order.

This has given rise, I believe, to two tragedies in the life and impact of the Church on the world. First, it has produced a sense of frustration in 200 million lay members of the Church in the world, and in two-and-a-half million lay members of the Church in India, that their secular occupations, so obviously necessary in the running of God's world and even in the running of Christian Churches and Christian Missions, do not come within the purview of Christian theology and give them the inspiration and impelling power to be co-workers with God in their occupations as part of God's plan of redemption for the world. This has produced what I may call *theological caste* in the Church which has impoverished the laymen, the Church and the world.

Secondly, this compartmentalization and gradation of life in Christian theology has focused the attention of Christian missions on the *heathen soul* of the villager and blurred his emaciated body and filthy environment out of focus. Even after a century of Christian missionary work in the under-developed areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America the general condition of 'Christian villagers' is hardly better than non-Christian villagers in their physical, social and economic aspects, and the cause for this is to be sought in the theology of the Church, which may be conceived as a circular theology with the soul or the spiritual in the centre and the temporal on the circumference.

There is a third tragedy, a menacing tragedy, which is the result of the first two tragedies. The intellectual frustration of educated men on the one hand, and the economic desperation of village people on the other, have created a vacuum which is being filled with the dynamite of communistic thinking. This is based on Marxist theology, which is also circular, but with the temporal in the centre and the spiritual on the circumference—a reversal of Christian theology.

INTEGRATED DOCTRINE

We cannot ignore the fact of the completeness or the totality of human life. The spiritual and the temporal are indivisible complements, one to the other, and they have to be integrated into a total Christian theology of life. Theology is made for life and not life for theology.¹

¹ S. P. Raju: *Secular Occupations and Christian Doctrine*, NCC Review, October-November 1954.

If you will forgive a little intrusion of geometry into theology, what is needed is that instead of a circular theology with the spiritual in the centre and the temporal on the circumference, and a reversed circular theology with the temporal in the centre and the spiritual in the periphery, the two circles have to be integrated into an ellipse. An ellipse is an oval shaped figure with two centres or foci with this remarkable property, that if, from any point on the orbit, lines are drawn to the two centres, their sum is always constant, wherever the point may be. One centre may be considered to be the motivating centre of the spiritual and the other of the temporal. The man on the orbit is influenced or activated by the forces from both the centres and takes a position on the orbit that is the resultant of the combined forces from both the centres. He may be nearer to the one than the other according to his personality, circumstance and calling in life, but activated and guided by a combination of both the forces of the spiritual and the temporal.

This is an attempt at indicating an integrated doctrine of the spiritual and the temporal, which gives unity and completeness to human life avoiding the danger of compartmentalizing or grading life into the *sacred* and the *secular*. Herein probably lies a picture, imperfect though it be, of a balanced theology of God and man in relation to God, which integrates spirit and work, thus 'life giving meaning to work and work giving meaning to life'.

It will be noticed that in trying to integrate spirit and work for evolving unity and completeness in the life of man and his relation to God a similar integration of the spiritual and the temporal is assumed in the concept of God. I believe that such a concept can be established by reason and revelation.

Christians are unfortunately steeped in the popular concept taught by the Church, that God is a Spirit, and nothing but Spirit. As a consequence of this unitary concept of God he is assumed to be profoundly innocent of any scientific knowledge regarding the matter and the forces operating in the universe though they repeat every week that they 'believe in God . . . Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible'.

If a scientist discovers any of these forces, science cannot put itself in competition with God, while what it has found out after laborious experimentation, measurement and reasoning, is what was already put there by God in his creative process which is still in progress. As a matter of fact the discovery was made by the mind and intuition of the scientist, which was also put there by God in his process of creating man.

When Kepler discovered the laws that governed the movement of heavenly bodies, he fell on his knees to glorify God. When Newton discovered the law of gravitation that operated in the universe, he humbled himself. Bose, who discovered that plants have feelings similar to animals, dedicated

laboratory to the goddess of learning. Einstein, who discovered the simple mathematical law that annihilated all distinction between matter and energy, and led to the splitting of the atom, felt that 'God' must be a mathematician.

This integrated concept of God as the supreme source of creative spirit as well as the supreme source of creative work, and the relation of man to God in the realm of spirit and work, may be further illustrated by means of a simple example from elementary science. Readers will be familiar with that striking experiment for demonstrating the way iron filings arrange themselves around a magnet according to a definite law. A magnet has two poles, the north and the south. The magnet cannot be conceived except with two poles. One pole cannot exist without the other. For the magnet to be operative it needs the functioning of both the poles. Each pole is as strong and powerful as the other in influencing the magnetic field. And its whole operation is invisible. This, in a general way, represents the concept of God, as we have been setting forth above.

The concept of man and his relation to God is illustrated by the iron filings and their behaviour in the invisible magnetic field. They set themselves in a definite pattern with these characteristics: they are no more inert iron filings, but little magnets partaking of the nature and the power of the magnet. They set themselves along definite lines and exert their own forces which are resultants of the forces due to both the poles. Every magnetic line of force, however remote it may be from the magnet, always connects both the poles, indicating their combined action on every particle. This may be an imperfect illustration but a practical one to indicate the line of approach to the new concept. The magnet represents God and the two poles his dual attributes as God of the spiritual, and God of the temporal, both equal but integrated. The magnetic field represents the invisible influence of the power of God. The iron filings represent man, weak and inert on his own, but when in the magnetic field capable of absorbing power from the magnet and transmitting it to the neighbouring particles. This example from science may help us to understand the implications of the integrated concept of spirit and work.

The whole experiment may well be a scientific parable to illustrate Paul's great saying: 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me.'

The Old Testament unfolds the revelation of a God of that description. In asking Noah to build an ark for meeting a catastrophe, he did not show himself simply as a Spirit, giving a warning to Noah and asking him to build an ark in which Noah himself was a technical expert. But God gave detailed specifications. The material for construction should be gopher wood, which was impervious and non-warping. It should be pitched inside and outside to be watertight. It should be 450 ft. long, 5 ft. broad, and 45 ft. high, with a lower, second and third

decks, so proportioned and weighed that its centre of gravity should maintain a safe equilibrium when exposed to winds and waves. This sounds like the specifications of a shipbuilding engineer!

The same kind of detailed specifications of materials, dimensions and workmanship are given to Moses for building the ark of the covenant and also the Tabernacle.

God is the Supreme Spirit, and at the same time God is the Supreme Workman. His inspiration and guidance to man is not only in the realm of the spirit, but equally also in the realm of work. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus for redeeming mankind. The same spirit was upon Isaiah to prophesy, upon Moses to lead, and upon Paul to preach. And the same spirit of the Lord was also upon Bezaleel, not to prophesy or lead or preach, but to be mastercraftsman in metal and stone and wood.

This process of revelation of the integrated concept of creative spirit and creative work goes on in the New Testament. Jesus, the Son of God, was born into a carpenter's family. He sanctified the workshop and its service to the village by making 'yokes' with such special concern and skill that they sat 'easy' on the necks of animals without hurting their humps, and their weight was so well balanced that their 'burden was light'.

This sanctification of spirit and work is the message of the Son of Man to the village working man.

DIAKONIA: TEMPORAL SERVICE

Now we turn to the second aspect: the practical approach of the Church to village problems.

All the practical service in the temporal realm, that the Church performs as an organization or expects its members to perform, comes broadly under the category of *diakonia*, and the person that is officially appointed to perform these tasks is called a *deacon*. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a *deacon* as 'appointed minister of charity, officer attending to congregation in secular affairs'.

In the Church's climate of religious thinking all of its social and economic service comes under 'charity', a 'first aid' to 'secular affairs'. According to the Church's theology, *Diakonia* is the Red Cross of *Kerygma*.

The question is: If *Kerygma* is the proclamation of the Gospel, and if *diakonia* is only ancillary to *kerygma*, does the limited gospel, the 'evangel' of evangelism, express the total content of the redemptive process of Jesus Christ as the Lord of the total life, total man, total society and total universe?

In its approach to the complexities of village problems the Church has to do some fundamental thinking; otherwise all its 'village uplift' will be fragmentary and uncoordinated, and the result will be temporary *relief* and not permanent *rehabilitation*.

These words *relief* and *rehabilitation* have meanings of such

underlying significance to our thesis that it is worth our while to make a closer study of them. The dictionary defines *relief* as 'alleviation of, or deliverance from pain, distress, anxiety, etc.; assistance given to the poor, or to persons in special danger or difficulty'.

On the other hand in the word *rehabilitation* the prefix *re-* means 'back, with return to previous state after lapse or cessation or occurrence of opposite state or action'. And *rehabilitation* means 'restoration to privileges, reputation or proper condition'.

Relief is temporary charity; but *rehabilitation* is permanent restoration to previous condition.

Relief in certain cases is of course necessary; but in the general planning for meeting village problems the Church's final goal must be *not* relief, but rehabilitation.

We shall be frequently using the expression '*economic problems*' and we must define its content in the context of our present study. The dictionary defines *economics* (Greek *oikonomikos*) as 'practical science of the production and distribution of wealth, (also) condition of a country as to material prosperity'.

Our study must then be directed to the following aspects:

First: to make an investigation of *village economics*, or condition of villages 'as to material prosperity', and relate this to *diakonia*, or the Church's temporal rehabilitation of village Christians;

Second: to evolve feasible methods of *diakonia* for improving the 'production and distribution of wealth' in the village Christian community in relation to present conditions of India;

Third: to integrate these with *kerygma* as the proclamation of the Gospel of the 'Kingdom of God' and build up a *koinonia*, or village society, in which the 'Rule of God' is accepted as sovereign.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

With this theological background of *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia*, let us study the practical problems of Indian villages in the context of the Indian Church.

(i) *Tension between Ruralism and Urbanism*

One of the basic problems of Indian villages, as a matter of fact of villages all round the world, is the tension between ruralism and urbanism. Ruralism and Urbanism are no longer conceived in terms of geographical location, but rather as the attitudes of mind regarding social, religious and civic inter-relationship between the individual, the family and the community. Ruralistic life has the trend of being personal, intimate, interdependent and co-operative, held together by rigid customary

laws and traditional obligations of the community. While there may be little personal independence, it ensures a sense of security. Ruralistic life may be broadly conceived as a family type of society. We may remind ourselves that the family is the unit of society, in which spontaneous personal concern, affection, service and sacrifice are the general operating forces in the relationship between members of the family. These are instinctive gifts of God, which need no outside motivation, and are to be preserved for the sake of community life.

On the contrary, urbanistic life has the trend of being impersonal and competitive, with a strong emphasis on personal freedom of choice; and its community life is organized on mutually accepted contractual understanding of rights and responsibilities, like a municipality, a civic association or a business company. Urbanistic life may be broadly conceived as a company type of society. In this the motivation for right conduct, fulfilment of civic duties and showing concern for others is not spontaneous and instinctive as in the family type, but depends entirely upon personal character, urge 'to be a gentleman' or for 'playing the game', when others are not watching. The agencies that produce this motivation for right conduct may be: (1) a spiritual force from within, due to the faith of religion; (2) moral pressure of public opinion due to the 'culture' of society or (3) restraining pressure due to civic rules or government legislation.

Among the agencies that are accelerating the trend towards urbanism in villages the Church is one of the strongest. Its programme of education has removed from the villages the best brains, talent and leadership and to that extent has permanently impoverished the village potential. The non-Roman Churches of India have a population of about 6 million, out of whom about 10 per cent live in towns, with varying degrees of contact with their villages. Many of these are really urban editions of rural originals. It may be estimated that about 5 million Christians live in villages and are the subject of this study.

While there may be notable examples here and there of their being better off than other villagers, in general, their living conditions, with respect to housing, occupational crafts, poverty and other economic factors, are about the same as other village people. A considerable number migrate to towns, industrial centres and construction projects, where more often than not, they lose touch with the Church and are in difficulties of various kinds. While a number of town Churches are making efforts to look after village migrants, I have a feeling that there are thousands of such people, who have become 'Displaced Persons' with all the implications of human struggle that the ominous letters 'D.P.' indicate these days.

One of the major village problems of the Indian Church is therefore in towns. This should be the concern of town Churches, preferably on an Inter-Church basis.

(ii) *Village Poverty*

In the villages themselves the most glaring problem is poverty.

In India with a rural population of 300 million people, with a household strength of 5 persons there are 60 million village homes. With a non-Roman village Christian population of 5 million, there must be one million village Christian homes. Space does not permit a detailed statistical study but the salient features of the economics of village homes may be summarized as follows:

1. Out of 5 persons in the home approximately
 earners are $1\frac{1}{2}$ persons
 earning dependants 1 persons
 non-earning dependants $2\frac{1}{2}$ persons
2. Out of 60 million village homes 20.4 per cent or 12½ million can afford less than Rs.50 a month for family expenditure. Out of this 66 per cent is for food. That is to say, judging the economic condition of the families by the index of money available for satisfying their hunger, the index for this group is less than Rs.6.6 per person per month.
3. On the whole, Christian families in villages seem to come in this lowest group with less than Rs.50 per month. In a Hyderabad State village (Ramayampet) the earning was found to be Rs.22 per month for a family of 4.5 persons, giving a food expenditure index of Rs.3 per person per month.

Regarding occupations of Christians there are no figures for India. A statement given by a statistician for Hyderabad in 1938 shows percentages of Christians according to occupations. These may be out of date, but give an indication of the trend.

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Labourers	... 62
Cultivators	... 29
Livestock breeders	... 3
Industries	... 3
Trade	... 1
Teachers, Doctors, Lawyers, etc.	... 2
	<hr/> 100 <hr/>

What is the Indian Church doing for improving the economic condition of village Christians? Here again information at all-India level is meagre. *The Christian Handbook of India* for 1954-5 gives a list of Church's 'Economic Institutions', which may be classified as follows:

1. Agricultural Settlements	...	63
2. Co-operative Societies, Banks, etc.	...	37
3. Printing Presses	...	45
4. Literature Distributing Centres	...	118
5. Miscellaneous Industries Centres	...	33
		<hr/> 296 <hr/>

If on a liberal estimate one institution touches about 50 people, the total number touched would be about 15,000 Christians out of a total of 5 million. This is a statistical indication of the effect of Church's theology on the economics of village Christians.

(iii) *Illiteracy*

Another basic problem intimately connected with helping village people to help themselves towards rehabilitation is illiteracy.

A statistical study indicates that while the literacy percentages of Christians are higher than the average for the country, there is an appalling disparity between village Christians and town Christians. In Andhra Pradesh which has the lowest literacy among the linguistic areas of the Church of South India, it is 75 per cent for towns and 10 per cent for villages.² Other states may be better; but on the whole it may be estimated that out of 5 million about 20 per cent or one million may be literate, the other 80 per cent or 4 million being illiterate.²

Any programme of rehabilitation must therefore include a vigorous and sustained campaign for village literacy for two reasons: *first*, it is essential that village people must have direct access to the Bible, the source of inspiration and guidance for their life and work; *secondly*, they must be able to read the special literature prepared for their social and economic regeneration.

A planned effort must be made to produce in all languages attractive books and periodicals on Village Economics.³

(iv) *Community Solidarity*

Another basic problem pertaining to rehabilitation of the whole village is the need for community solidarity.

In the overall picture of the 'Mission' of the Church and its 'Missionary' programme, the removal of poverty, illiteracy and other tensions of the villages is *not* an end in itself, but a means towards the establishment of a village society, *koinonia*, that is

² S. P. Raju: *Church Statistics and their Evaluation*, NCC Review, January 1958.

³ S. P. Raju: *Christian Literature on Village Economics*, NCC Review, May 1958.

comparable to the 'Kingdom of God'. This expression has become so worn out that at one limit it may be just a theological expression for 'the state of being good'. At the other limit it may stand for an impossible Utopia of a 'Kingdom of Heaven', in which every one will be an angel. We must be realistic and practical in its application. It must mean a society in which every individual and group must make an honest effort to apply the 'Rule of God' or the 'Rule of Love' in all considerations affecting themselves and the society to which they belong. Secondly, there must be community thinking and action to shape village society in such a way as to produce community solidarity.

The Indian Church feels it has an all-India 'mission'. It consists of 6,000,000 Christians living in about 30,000 local congregations, whose spiritual and temporal needs are looked after by about 50,000 Indian workers and about 5,000 overseas workers.

There must be over 25,000 village congregations in India. The Willingen Session of the International Missionary Council (1952) recorded a most fundamental finding, when it said: '*The basic function of the Church is to build up the life of the local congregation*'—the total life including its social and economic temporalities. Every village congregation is to be built up into a virile community so that the 5 million village Christians may be 'creative minorities' set in the midst of 300 million village neighbours.

Space does not permit elaboration of a community programme, but an outline of practical measures may be indicated as including:

1. Community Study of the Bible in relation to the problems of the village, making village Christians realize that their occupational crafts are in the plan of God for the service of society; and that they are co-workers with God;
2. Community Panchayat to evolve and guide community action;
3. Community Civics including improvement to village homes and village environment;⁴
4. Community Economics including improvement of agriculture, village industries and village co-operatives.⁵

THEOLOGY A SCIENCE

This is the thesis of a Christian engineer. I have come to the belief that there is such a thing as a *Christian Discipline of*

⁴ S. P. Raju: *Improving Village Homes*—UNESCO & UNO Seminars.

S. P. Raju: *Smokeless Kitchens for the Millions*—CLS, Madras.

Rs.1/25.

⁵ S. P. Raju: *Crusade Against Village Poverty*—Report of a Seminar on Village Economics, April 1957.

S. P. Raju: *Bringing Better Life to the Village Millions*.

Engineering, in which engineering is looked upon as the science of discovering and utilizing the materials and forces of God's nature for the temporal service of mankind, constituting *diakonia*. Similarly I believe in the *Christian Discipline of Theology* as the science of religion, the science of discovering and utilizing the insights into the nature and power of God for the spiritual service of mankind, constituting *kerygma*. I also believe in the *Christian Discipline of Religion*. Religion is essentially a discipline of inter-relationship between God, man, society and Nature. And the religion of Christ provides the detonation of his redeeming power to release the enormous human potential that lies hidden in the village people for evolving a village society, that shapes its total life and work according to the Rule of God, constituting *koinonia*.

The building up of such a village society is the task of the Indian Church in relation to the village problems of India.

A personal word of reminiscence before I close. Over forty years ago after graduation in science I was awarded a government scholarship for engineering. I happened to attend a Y.M.C.A. Students Camp where I made a 'decision for Christ'. At that time it was considered that such a decision should result in joining 'Christian Mission Service'. I offered myself to a Mission, but was not accepted. Then I sought admission to the Serampore Theological College, but the Principal (the Rev. J. Howells) regretted there was no scholarship available. In the middle of the engineering course I decided to leave it for some other 'Christian service'. But a Christian Professor of my college from New Zealand suggested that I may complete the course: for, who knows, engineering may become useful in any technical work of the Church? He was prophetic!

After these long years to be called to the technical service of village people and the village Church, and to get an invitation from the same Serampore village, the shrine of a cobbler-theologian, for an article to its *Theological Journal* on the techno-theology and techno-theology of village problems sounds like a romantic story in God's 'mysterious way' of using men for His plans.

Women in the Indian Church

CAROL GRAHAM

The Church in India, except for the various branches of the Syrian Church, is not an indigenous growth. It has been planted here by missionaries from the West and has consequently inherited both the strength and the weakness of the parent stem from which it has sprung. Moreover, in the case of most of the Reformed Churches, the missionary movement was at its height during the Victorian era and, as a result, many of the prejudices and traditions of that time were brought to India along with the timeless Gospel and faith in the eternal God. Only the other day an Indian Bishop remarked that if you wanted to see the Church as she was in the days of good Queen Victoria, you should look to India rather than to England! We have only to read the novels of eighteenth-century England to realize that in those days professional education for women was almost non-existent and that such Church activities as educated ladies were allowed to engage in were exceedingly amateur. This is the background from which most of the early missionaries came and it was this tradition, coming not only from England but also from many European countries and from America, that was first grafted on to Indian society. Since then there has been a complete revolution with regard to the position of Indian women in the outside world, their education, professional status, etc., with which the Church has not altogether kept pace. At the same time in some important respects—e.g. marriage and the relation of the sexes, the extent to which parental control must still be accepted even by highly educated wage-earners, and so forth—Indian society has remained more or less static and much of this appears to be supported by Christian tradition. It is this somewhat complicated and often contradictory situation which forms the background to any consideration of the contribution of Indian women to the life of the Church, since that is necessarily conditioned both by the state of society in which they live and the traditions which they have inherited from abroad.

After the first meeting of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948, a Commission was set up under the chairmanship of Miss Sarah Chakko, entitled *The Life and Ministry of Women in the Church*, which attempted to make a comprehensive survey of the ministry of women, their position and status, the scope of their work and their contribution to the whole life

of the Christian community throughout the world. The urgency of this matter had come to the World Council at Amsterdam along two different lines: i.e. the richness which women's groups and organizations were bringing to the life of the Church side by side with a great sense of frustration that, in these days of rapid change, the Church as a whole was not making the most of women's gifts and abilities. It was the realization that these two kinds of experience must be brought together which led to the formation of the Commission but, as its work proceeded, two things became evident. First, that the life and ministry of women could not be separated from that of men, and, secondly, that it could not be studied apart from the society which surrounds the Church. Consequently, at Evanston, the Commission was reconstituted as the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society, a cumbersome title if ever there was one but definitely expressive of something fundamental to our Christian thinking. The functions of the Department were then defined as follows:

1. To interpret the relations between men and women on a Christian basis.
2. To stimulate women to take their full place in the life of the Church.
3. To secure an ecumenical outlook in Women's Organizations.

It will be seen from this that the scope of the Department was made exceedingly wide, its purpose being to integrate the life and work of Christian women, from each aspect and at every level, with the whole life and work of the Church to which they belong.

At the first conference organized by this Department in the summer of 1955, a comprehensive survey was made of the work of women in the Church in many parts of the world and it soon became clear that there were two main trends to be taken into consideration. First, from America, came the tale of how their women, accustomed to the fullest freedom and equality in every other sphere of life, have attempted to overcome their frustration in Church life by developing very powerful and extremely wealthy Women's Auxiliaries, running parallel to the Church, financing their own missionary work, founding colleges, schools, hospitals, etc., and being in most ways entirely independent of their parent body. It seemed as if in most Churches, far from there being neither male nor female, the One Body of Christ was divided into men and women working in separate spheres through different organizations. Among the Continental Churches, on the other hand, there were practically no women's organizations (apart from the interdenominational ones such as the Y.W.C.A.) and there seemed to be a deep sense of frustration among many Christian women who felt they were regarded by the Church only as inferior and semi-capable beings. Women who stood high in their

professional careers or who had staked their all in resistance movements during the war felt themselves to be rejected by the Church because of the dead hand of past tradition. In Britain, the situation seemed to veer between these two extremes, the Church of Scotland, for instance, inclining strongly towards the parallel organization, while many of the Free Churches were making a much fuller use of the ministry of women, with the Anglican Church as usual sitting on the fence! One felt compelled to ask this question: Can the Church in India move steadily towards a greater and more comprehensive use of women, with all their gifts and abilities, and at the same time integrate their ministry fully with the life of the Church, thus avoiding both the sense of frustration and the danger of feminism? In order to answer this question it is necessary to consider the position of Indian women today, both in society as a whole and in the life of the Church.

It is certainly true that Indian women owe their present degree of emancipation to Christian education since the Church and the Christian community as a whole were pioneers in this respect. For this reason Christian women in India were the first to enter into certain fields of activity which have now come to be regarded as peculiarly suitable for women, e.g. teaching, nursing, ministering to the needs of women and children, etc. It is undoubtedly true that, even thirty years ago, the majority of Indian women in the medical or teaching professions were Christians. Today non-Christian women have caught up with their Christian sisters in this respect, but how much of this rapid progress do they owe to the existence and influence of Christian schools and colleges? Most of the women who blazed the trail along this path of service to their Church and country belonged to a generation who had foregone marriage in order to devote themselves more completely to their vocation as teacher, doctor or nurse. This generation is now gradually dying out since it has become possible for married women to follow almost any profession but the Church will undoubtedly be the poorer for the loss of this single-hearted devotion given in and through so many Christian institutions.

Meanwhile a new need has arisen which is leading educated Indian women into new and often difficult paths of Christian service. In November 1948 an inter-denominational conference was held in Madras on the Life and Ministry of Women in the Church which was sponsored by the Commission of the World Council of Churches already referred to. Here great emphasis was laid on the need for educated and trained leadership in the villages and the practical difficulties most Indian women felt in answering this call. Not the least of these was the reluctance of their parents to allow them to enter a field of service for which there seemed to be no provision of security nor adequate recognition by the Church. It was in fact a vicious circle since the

Church would do nothing until a supply of women was forthcoming and the women would not offer until the Church showed signs of wanting them. Out of this situation there has arisen in the Church of South India an Order for Women who, having been duly selected, trained and commissioned by the Church, are now engaged in all forms of Church work. These Sisters of the C.S.I. do not take vows of celibacy but they cannot be fully commissioned until they are over thirty years of age and are accepted only on the basis of a real and tried sense of vocation. They have grown steadily in number from twenty-seven to sixty during the last six years and the Order has never been without at least three or four probationers. Their work varies enormously in scope as they themselves vary in their educational attainments. The main point is that the Church has recognized and set her seal upon this ministry for women and the women have been given the opportunity to make their particular contribution to the life of the Church and to enter into positions of real leadership in ways not open to them before.

All this, however, concerns only the minority of women who are able to undergo special training and desire to identify themselves wholly with what is technically known as 'Church work'. What about the vast majority, mostly married, educated and illiterate, living in the towns and villages of our land? Have they no contribution to make to the life of the Church? Far from it, for they are often the backbone of the Christian congregation. Here undoubtedly much has been done and much more could be done through the various women's organizations. The chief problem lies in the extent to which so many of these women are wholly or partially illiterate, living often at or below starvation level and entirely taken up with the struggle for existence for themselves and their families. Yet even against all these odds real progress has been made through systematic teaching following a carefully thought-out syllabus, applied at every point to village conditions, which includes instruction through the media of lyrics, action songs, kummi, dramas and such-like. Even annual oral examinations for wholly illiterate village women have been successfully undertaken and have provided a great opportunity for the town ladies to go out at least once a year to some near-by village and gain practical experience of its problems and its charms! Moreover it is a great mistake to neglect the gifts of potential leadership that are often to be found in people who can neither read nor write. A number of years ago, in some of the villages of Andhra, the experiment was tried of having Women Elders, chosen by the Christian women and duly appointed by the Pastor in the presence of the whole congregation. The choice was invariably good and in many cases the Women Elders did wonderful service among the women and children, bringing them to Church, healing quarrels, encouraging Christian giving and even sitting on panchayats when they were dealing with cases of immorality where women were concerned. Now in many

areas such women are being brought in to various centres to take part in courses for lay leaders from the villages and we are realizing more and more that the Church of rural India must look to its own sons and daughters for the leadership it so sorely needs.

Another aspect of Christian work in which women have been to the fore is that represented by the Christian Home Movement. It is a deep-rooted Indian tradition that the woman is the spiritual head of the family and there are various ceremonies in a Hindu home, such as the daily lamp-lighting ritual, which are always performed by the mother. After the big International Missionary Conference held at Tambaram in 1938 the following sentence appeared in the report: 'There are no two institutions which need each other so much as the Christian Church and the Christian home,' and it is on the solid basis of Indian custom and tradition that much of our teaching on Christian marriage and family life has been securely laid. The Indian Church certainly owes a great deal to the Christian teaching, the practice of daily prayer and Bible reading and the example of a truly Spirit-filled life given by countless wives and mothers in their homes. In these days of rapid change, when the old pattern of family life is dying out and so many wives and mothers are also professional women, it will be a terrible loss to the Church if the influence of Christian homes with their family prayers and regular habits of worship is allowed to dwindle and die. Husbands and fathers undoubtedly have a big part to play too but the lead will rest with the women.

Yet another notable contribution to the life of the Church has often been made by the wives of ministers, evangelists and other Church workers. It would be impossible to overrate the quiet and unassuming share which many women have taken in their husband's ministry, especially among the women and in the villages. Sometimes real gifts of leadership have emerged in most unexpected directions and a very real partnership in work for the Kingdom has ensued. On rare occasions it has been the wife who proved to be the moving spirit and I have known of at least one instance where quite a considerable movement of caste people into the Church had begun through the work of the Pastor's wife among the Sudra women. The tremendous potentialities of such work were fully realized by the late Bishop Azariah when he first started the systematic training of the wives of the ordinands at Dornakal which has since been adopted in many other theological colleges. People living in Dornakal used to say that they could set their clocks by the sight of Mrs. Azariah setting off under her big umbrella at the hottest time of the day to take the women's classes while the husbands stayed at home to mind the children! Once again here is an important contribution to the growth of the Church which is largely lost today in our changing pattern of life. Owing to economic pressure it is no longer possible for an educated wife to remain unemployed and in the pressure of trying to run both a professional career and a family how much time and energy is there left to share in her husband's

ministry? Much has been said and written about 'unpaid curates' both in India and elsewhere but to my certain knowledge there were scores of women who gloried in their vocation as the wives of Pastors and village teachers.

Have Indian women given of their best to the Church and has the Church made the fullest use of their ministry? As usual the answer seems to be both Yes and No. We have seen that much has been done but there seem to be two ways in which lies failure. Of all the Christian women receiving higher education in India today, how few, how terribly few, feel the call to a life of Christian service. Does not this reflect the failure of Christian mothers in the greatest trust which God has given them? And if a Christian girl does desire to give herself and her gifts to the service of God, how much encouragement does she receive in her so-called Christian home from her professedly Christian parents? It is perhaps here more than anywhere else that Christian homes are failing to produce the atmosphere in which the saints of God can grow up to seek His will and answer His call. Again, among all the Christian women in Government service, how many, how tragically many, are completely out of touch with the Church? Does not this reflect the failure of our ministers and lay leaders to go out of their way to bring such people right into the Christian fellowship? Anyone who has had experience in organizing retreats for Christian women working in Government institutions can testify both to the difficulties and temptations which often beset them and to their real hunger for a living relationship with Christ. During the last two years a Christian Medical Fellowship has come into being in the Mysore State which has brought some of us into intimate contact with doctors, nurses, midwives and public health visitors whose living interest in the Christian religion and joy in Christian fellowship *when they can get it* is an inspiration and a reproach to those of us who enjoy it all the time, and we know that there are still about one thousand of such medical workers in the Mysore State alone who are practically untouched by the Church.

Does this failure to attract young women into specifically Christian service or to prevent them from drifting away from the ordinary Church life indicate a more deep-seated malady than mere indifference on their part and neglect on ours? In India as in all the world, the Church apparently holds the last ditch in the struggle for male superiority. In every other sphere women find themselves able to work side by side with men on a basis of complete equality even if the practical application of the work is slightly different. For instance we still have women's colleges, girls' schools, and hospitals that deal specifically with women and children but nobody ever suggests that women doctors, professors or teachers are in any sense less capable or less qualified than men of the same grade. Already in only ten years of independence, India has had women Ministers, Governors of States and diplomats, and has even been represented by a woman on the United

Nations Organization. Only in the Church are women debarred from partaking in a full ministry, side by side with men, a ministry which might well be different from but should certainly be complementary to the ordained ministry of whole Body of Christ. Can we honestly expect the *total* contribution of women to the life of the Church as long as this barrier remains? This is the crucial question which the Church has to face today, whether in the East or in the West, with ever-increasing urgency. Ours is the religion of the Incarnation with its complete redemption and sanctification of body, mind and spirit. Can this be reconciled with any doctrine which denies to one half of the human race any share in the highest form of Christian service on the grounds of inherent inferiority? If not, are reasons of practical expediency or emotional prejudice to be allowed to settle this matter for ever? There are questions which admit of no easy solution especially here in India where Hindu and Jewish ideas of ceremonial uncleanness still persist strongly in the Christian community. For instance in the Orthodox Syrian Church there are times when women are not even allowed to enter the Church building much less partake of Holy Communion because of physical impurity. Yet this is a living issue which cannot be continually shelved except at our peril. In our rapidly changing pattern of life, where insecurity predominates and Christian values are being challenged as never before, we must use to the full every source of spiritual strength that God has given us and the potential power lying virtually untapped in the hearts and minds of our leading Christian women is still unguessed because it has never been fully explored. At present almost every Church is hiding behind the fear of unilateral action and its repercussions on other Christian bodies. It is for the Church as a whole to see the vision of the greatly increased gifts and capabilities of women and to claim them for God with courage, insight and expectancy.



The basic difference between Buddhism and Christianity is that the Buddha saw that life was meaningless in itself, and set out to rescue men from this meaninglessness. Jesus, on the other hand, saw that life could become meaningful in God and set out to call men to share that meaning. . . To attain Nibbana is to be rid of the sorrow and meaninglessness of life's constant becoming, to attain to Life Eternal is to attain to the state where Nibbana itself is fulfilled in the deathless perfecting of life's meaning.

The Indian Church and the Community Life

S. JESUDASON

To avoid any misunderstanding let me at the very first explain that I mean here by the word 'Church' the fellowship of all Christian believers who love the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confess Him as their Lord and Saviour whatever their denominational affiliation may be; the permanent membership of our Christukula Ashram is open to all such Christians. Also I have used the word 'community' (loosely used in India to indicate very many different things) to signify the intimate fellowship of a band of Christ's disciples united as a spiritual family of Christ (Christukula) for a life of prayer and humble service of the poor. This ashram was founded on the 7th of March, 1921, at Tirupattur, North Arcot District in Tamilnad; its basis is faith in and devotion to Jesus Christ, and its aim is to bring our fellowmen into living touch with Christ by a life of prayer, by love for one another and by a life of selfless service inspired by the love of Christ.

THE SUPRA-RACIAL ASPECT OF AN ASHRAM

This ashram was founded soon after the First World War had torn into warring factions the Christian nations of the West; moreover the colour bar in the West and specially the policy of Apartheid practised by white people in South Africa as well as the spirit of caste even among our Indian Christians had been playing havoc among the Churches. It is a very sad fact that in the election of Church Council members or even of ministers or bishops caste feeling asserts itself either openly or in a clandestine manner; this must be rooted out. Hence the constitution of our ashram says that we should seek to bind by the bond of love members of all countries, colours and communities or castes into a family of Christ.

THE SUPRA-DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF AN ASHRAM

Our Lord taught us that by our love for one another we should let our neighbours find out that we are His disciples. He gathered together a band of twelve apostles who differed both from Him and from each other in very many different ways; by

this He showed us how love should transcend differences of opinion and nature. Yet down the ages Christians have fought with one another and persecuted one another because they were intolerant of those who differed from them in teaching or doctrine, utterly forgetting the clear teaching of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 ; thus they split themselves up into sects and denominations. The ashrams stand for church unity in action. The ecclesiastical quarrels of the West have no place in the evolution or development of the Indian Church. Christian Indians have to think and act in the light of their Lord and Saviour and in the light of His Holy Word ; this is the main spring from which alone they should drink. Non-Christians are only bewildered by our sectarianism and look upon all of us as Christians only whether we be Roman Catholics or non-Romans. Ashrams stand for unity, not uniformity, for harmony in diversity.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

While Christianity is supra-national it has also the capacity to adapt itself to the various cultures, spiritual heritages, languages, customs and modes of expression of all the nations of the world ; ' they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it ' (Revelation 21 : 26). The Constitution of the Christukula Ashram says : ' Since whatever things are good in our Indian spiritual heritage belong also to the realm of Christ's teaching, we should observe them and bring them into practice in our lives and teaching '. The impression that Christianity is a foreign religion is deeply rooted in the minds of all our countrymen whether they be the common people or the highly intellectual ones. Indian Christians trained from childhood in Western forms of worship, ecclesiastical systems, theological formulae, music, church architecture etc. have also contributed a good deal to this impression. Not only the essentials but even the non-essentials from the Western Churches have been incorporated into our manner of worship and into our theology ; when I was young even Indian music was banned as ' heathen ' ! Christian Indians must not neglect their ancient spiritual heritage : they must seek the treasures of knowledge, wisdom and beauty that lie hidden in the literature of the past. They should not reject these by hair-splitting derivations of Hindu religious terms and expressions which might ultimately lead them even to reject their own mother-tongues *in toto*. It is wonderful to note how our Lord in the days of His flesh talked to men according to their capacity, using words and expressions of their own to teach the deep truths of His Kingdom. Sometimes His very disciples failed to understand His words but His love bore with them and He spoke to them and to the people often in their ordinary human language in spite of its limitations. In order to save us He entered as it were not only into our flesh but also into our minds and being with deep sympathy. The indigenous expression of our Christian faith is in the

spirit of the Incarnation, and also in accordance with the spirit of His great apostle who became all things to all men that he might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:20-23).

The Christukula Ashram stands for identification with the poor in our villages by a life of simplicity including manual labour and by serving them in such a way as shall contribute to their spiritual, mental and material benefit. We have a hospital and school for the service of poor villagers where all work is done without any salary by unpaid members and volunteers provided only with the barest necessities of life. It requires much faith and prayer to depend upon God to provide us with the needed suitable workers on this basis, as proper human personalities are more essential for the work of His Kingdom than money, methods or equipment. But God has wonderfully supplied us with helpers during now more than thirty-seven years of this ashram's existence. In a way this is an answer to the oft-repeated charge that missionary work in India is based on foreign financial support. Also so often our Indian Christians, accustomed in the past to paid evangelistic work, hesitate to come forward for voluntary unpaid work. In this land, accustomed to religious men renouncing all for a spiritual purpose, more and more evangelistic workers are necessary who like St. Paul will work with their hands (or do some so-called secular work) to maintain themselves, and 'make the Gospel without charge' (1 Corinthians 8:18). Professionalism in religious work will harm its progress. It is sad that missionary societies and churches often place their financial needs in the forefront of their appeals. Before political independence men were willing to go and work in villages on a self-sacrificing basis, but now everyone seeks for security and comfort—even the very men who before courted imprisonment and lived lives of simplicity. Independence, while I realize its beneficial and bright sides, has not brought prosperity to the millions who in remote rural areas suffer from hunger and want and all kinds of illnesses without any aid. The Christian Church must inspire and train young people for self-sacrificing service in rural areas. Christian ashrams must be centres for training such voluntary workers. At Courtallam, near Tenkasi in Tamilnad, we have a Gurukula for training Christian young men for Christian work. The training consists mainly in the study of the Bible, especially the New Testament, in a thorough way, with a spirit of devotion and reverence, as well as evangelistic work in villages and manual labour at home. The response for long-term training is poor as there is no security of a paid job at the end of the training. But this Gurukula is very helpful for the quiet study of the Scriptures and for publishing the notes as commentaries in Tamil among our Christians. The lives of Church Fathers including Indian Church Fathers have also been published. During the summer holidays however students come in large numbers for short courses of study and this house is packed with them.

NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

I should like to mention here the attitude a Christian ashram should take towards non-Christian religions and especially to the Bhaktas of other religions. The Tamilnad has produced Bhakti poets who have enriched Tamil religious literature with the sweetest and most inspiring devotional poetry, capable of charming any spiritually-minded man be he a Christian or a non-Christian. An attitude of contempt or lack of appreciation of these would be most unbecoming to a disciple of the Lord Who when He was on earth admired the faith of a Roman or a Syrophoenician. St. John speaks too in his Gospel of 'the light that lighteth every man coming into the world' and describes Jesus as the Logos, a word taken from Gentile Greek philosophy. My own personal feeling is that St. John would have used the term *Om* if he had been writing his gospel today for Indian Christians. Fear of syncretism must not make us blind to the fact that the all loving Father of mankind has spoken to our Indian Fathers also at sundry times and in divers manners in times past (Hebrews 1:1). Christ is also the real fulfilment of the best spiritual aspirations of those sincere souls of the past in our land. Truth is truth whether uttered by us or by those who differ from us. With Faber let us sing:

We make His love too narrow by false limits of our own,
We magnify His strictness by a zeal He will not own ;
For the love of God is broader than the measures of
mankind,
And the heart of the Eternal is wonderfully kind.

And with Whittier :

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray ;
But dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way.

Even St. Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, made this wonderfully deep revealing statement at the Gentile Cornelius' house : Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34f). While standing firm on the unshakeable foundation of faith in the person of our Lord, the Christian ashrams have to help our Indian Christians to develop that healthy and correct attitude to non-Christian religions which will attract the non-Christian to Him as their Friend and Lord and not repel them as their enemy.

BRAHMACHARYA OR CELIBACY

Our Lord has told us that there are men who adopt celibacy for the sake of His Kingdom (Matthew 19:12). There is reason

to believe that some at least of the apostles like St. John were celibates. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that unmarried life would help a man to devote himself entirely to the things of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). In the strong reaction that followed the great Reformation initiated by that wonderful reformer Martin Luther what was good was also sometimes thrown overboard along with that which was or had become bad. One of these was the fact that God does call men and women who have seen His vision to follow an unmarried life for the sake of fulfilling in their lives the vision they have seen. The life of our Lord was a shining example of this when we realize that He too was perfect in His humanity and entered into our human nature and its human instincts; that is the exquisite beauty of the Incarnation. In this land with its great tradition of sadhus and sannyasis and their spirit of renunciation there is a great need of men and women who for His sake will renounce all earthly bonds in order to devote themselves, their energy and enthusiasm, for His Kingdom, sublimating their natural instincts so that they may shine out in the service of His love and in the winning of others for His love—not by a suppression of natural instincts but by their sublimation. A few like Sadhu Sundar Singh may go as wandering prophets of the Kingdom to remote and dangerous realms and face martyrdom, but others will seek to unite their lives with others like-minded into a community or fellowship and seek to establish the new Jerusalem on this earth. Ashrams belong to this latter group, for Christianity is essentially a religion of living and working in a fellowship. This will prove that a spiritual family of Christ is even more real in its bond of love and sharing of spiritual and material things than an ordinary human family created by marriage (Matthew 12:46-50).

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

In ancient ashrams rishis spent long periods in silent meditation. They practised yoga, seeking for union with God. In absolute silence they adopted different *yoga asanas* and went through the different stages of yoga such as (i) *chittavritti* or suspension of such mental faculties as would hinder the coming of God to meet them within; (ii) *dhyāna* or meditation when God appears before the yogi; (iii) *dhāranā* or firm grasp when the realization of God becomes full and He alone is real and the soul becomes absolutely insensitive to anybody or anything else; and (iv) he enters into *samādhi* or union with God and attains *shānti* or peace. *Sādhana* or realization of an ideal was the object; and the rishis and the shishyas were not together in an ashram primarily for research or study but to realize an ideal.

Now in our Christian churches and in our religious meetings there is usually a great deal of singing, shouting, preaching, long extempore prayers, etc., but so often there is very little time spent in corporate silence or meditation (with the exception perhaps of

quaker meetings). We speak more to God than we let Him speak to us ; for this we need to be still. 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Elijah heard the voice of God only during the silence when the still small voice spoke to him. For forty days our Lord was in silence in the desert of temptation and later He often spent whole nights in silence with His Father on the hilltops. India is a land of Mauna (Silent) Sannyasis some of whom spent years together in silence. When Siva appeared to Thayumanavar as Mauna Guru that Tamil bhakti poet got from him, as the Guru Upadesh for which he had longingly waited, only two words : 'Be still' (*Chumma iru*).

In the ashram at Tirupattur we observe as times for silent meditation the morning and evening *sandhya* times ; *sandhya* literally means the *sandhi* or meeting of the day and the night (the evening when the sun has just gone down but the first star has not risen in the sky) and the meeting of the night and the day (the dawn when the sun has not risen but the last star has disappeared). Ancient ashrams were mostly situated amidst beautiful natural surroundings or by the side of rivers or amidst forests, conducive to meditation and the realization of God. Christian ashrams must be centres of training for prayer and meditation for our Christians through retreats when a good deal of time may be spent in silence alone and corporately. In the ashram at Tirupattur these times of silence, especially during the evening *sandhya* times, have been found most uplifting and helpful. Corporate silence has a stimulating effect on the growth of love and fellowship among those who take part in it. Christ's presence becomes real and no spirit of ill-will or separation of heart from heart is possible in such an atmosphere. In my experience the young Christian men who come to our ashram or gurukula find times of silence very irksome and get restless when asked to observe silence at specified hours of day or even night ; our Indian Christians must be trained in observing silence in prayer.

In our medical work also we pray for and with our village patients and in their child-like simplicity and faith they respond very well and co-operate with us heartily. Ashrams must be spiritual power-houses.

AHIMSA OR LOVE

In the most ancient ashrams Ahimsa stood for the reconciliation of conflicting aspects of life. The rishi and his disciples sought to live in harmony with the universe, loving both man and beast and recognizing the spiritual unity of all life. Ahimsa gained love by giving love, removing suspicion, doubt and hate, and thus breaking down the middle-wall of partition. Christian Indians have this same tradition, crowned by the Cross of Christ Who is our peace and has broken down the middle-wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity (Ephesians 2: 14-15). India is getting a name in the world as a peace-maker.

Should not we as Christian Indians be in the forefront of this great work of peace in a world that is being threatened with utter destruction through ballistic missiles and hydrogen bombs? Christian ashrams must work for world peace. Every evening at five (the hour that corresponds in India to the hour of our Lord's death in Palestine) our church bell rings, calling upon us to pray silently for peace on earth. May the Church in India be a peace-maker both at home and abroad!

From what I have stated above it will be clear that Christian ashrams aim primarily at building up the Christian life on the pattern of our Lord and His family of disciples, first among the members of the ashram itself and secondly among their fellow-Christians; the first concern is for those who profess and call themselves Christians. An ashram is not an evangelistic agency for work among non-Christians neither is it a *new* method of evangelism. It is bound to be evangelistic in its influence, for Christian life is nothing if it is not self-propagating and winning those around to the love of Christ. Even our Lord towards the latter part of His earthly ministry concentrated upon the training of His disciples by close intimacy with them, by taking them apart often to be with Himself alone and by teaching them privately. The greatest hindrance to the spread of God's kingdom is the inconsistent and the un-Christlike lives of professing Christians.

Members of an ashram can never forget that Christ's other sheep are also within the orbit of their work and influence. During the thirty-seven years of our work at Tirupattur we gratefully and with wonder realize how our non-Christian villagers love us and crowd round us for help and advice and listen to the Gospel of Christ. On Sunday mornings our temple, built in the style of Dravidian Tamil architecture, is often filled with Hindu and Muslim villagers; and they reverently join with us as we worship God in an indigenous manner with the kind of singing and adoration which appeal to them. At Christmas every year, after our Christmas service attended by a very large number of non-Christians, nearly two thousand villagers—Hindus, Muslims and Christians—sit down together for a simple common meal (a love feast), without any distinction of caste or creed, served by members of the different communities. An Indian pastor must look upon all the people in his area, not merely Christians but also Hindus and Muslims, as his parishioners, and love them, visit them and be ready to serve and help them. The ashrams stand for this wider outlook in the Indian Church and help it thus to gather into one the children of God that are scattered in the world (John 11:52). How our Lord's heart was moved with deep compassion and love when He beheld the crowd that gathered around Him 'as sheep without a shepherd'.

The success of evangelism cannot be measured in India by the mere numbers added to the Church annually. The Kingdom of God is like a leaven that worketh and produces mighty results secretly and unobserved. The importance of personal work

among individuals in an ashram and by work among churches cannot be over-emphasized. Senior members of Christian ashrams often go out travelling among the churches, either as members of a gospel team or in an individual capacity; they preach in churches, visit colleges and high schools and set aside a good deal of their time for meeting personally and privately individuals who come to them for advice and prayer. It is wonderful how young people especially respond to this personal and private care if one shows personal love for them.

Though the growth of permanent membership seems very slow, the Christian ashrams have trained many young people who have come to them for shorter or longer periods as volunteers and have gone out into various spheres of life; and we trust and hope that they will exercise an influence for God's glory in the churches to which they belong and among the people with whom they live and work. In order to encourage *grahastahas* (family people) to carry out in ordinary life as far as possible some of the ideals for which an ashram stands we have what we call Friends of the Ashram. These are expected to meet for retreats in an ashram once a year and also keep in touch with senior members of the ashram through correspondence at other times.

'I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband . . . Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples. . . Behold, I make all things new.' (Revelation 21:1-5.) This is the dream, this is the vision of Christian ashrams; pray for us.



The peculiar faith of Christianity is that there are two points of view from which every truth must be approached—a human point of view and a divine. There is the truth as man sees it from his predicament as man, and there is also the truth as God reveals it to man in terms of God's own purpose for man and for the world. So that the whole truth lies in holding together both these under one insight. Thus, life judged from the human end alone leads men either to a dreaming about utopias or to a renunciation of life's responsibilities; while life judged from the divine end alone leads men either to a dreaming about milleniums or to a denial of our temporal existence. The whole truth is affirmed only when it is recognized that we may not speak about life without speaking simultaneously both about man and about God, and about man as man and God as God. Indeed, we state both sides of the truth only when we state them in tension—man in tension with God, and God in tension with man—for to fuse them both together, as we do when we disguise man with divinity or enmesh God in human systems, is to destroy both.

A Further Note on Philippians

2:5

MICHAEL HOLLIS

I think that Dr. Hanson* is entirely right in his rejection both of the Moffatt version of this passage and of the interpretation in the Moffatt Commentary. I am not certain what the translators of the R.S.V. meant. But is the R.V. translation, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus', possible? It is not enough to say, as is said in one commentary, that it would be more usual if we had 'Which Christ Jesus also thought in himself'. That is not what the text says. It is the meaning suggested by those MSS and versions which have a passive verb in the third person in the first clause, but it is clear that this cannot be the original reading.

Suppose that we render the passage: 'Think this in yourselves, which also (you think) in Christ Jesus', can we give it any intelligible meaning? I think that it is the simplest rendering of the Greek and that it is more Pauline than the ordinary translation. That calls upon the Philippians to imitate their Lord. In verses 1-4 St. Paul has demanded that they reach a standard of self-abnegation and unity which is, humanly speaking, impossible. Verse 5 can only be rightly understood if it is taken in the closest connection with what precedes it. He has to convince these Christians at Philippi that he is entirely serious in what he asks for. It is not impossible and he sets out to show why. On the ordinary interpretation he does this by appealing to the example of Jesus. That is not a usual pattern of thought for St. Paul. He does not argue that Christians can do something because Jesus has done it, in the sense that what man has done man can do. He does, again and again, insist that the Christian has, by what Christ has suffered and done, been so radically altered, so remade, that what was before impossible has become possible. The Christian really, not merely ideally, is a new man in Christ.

But no one knew better than St. Paul that Christians do in fact behave as if all this had never happened; as if they were still just what they had been. His answer is always the same; Remember what God has done in Christ Jesus. In other words, Be

* See *The Indian Journal of Theology*, Volume Seven, Number Two, p. 73.

what you are. Is it not exactly this that he is saying here? This humanly impossible unity is possible because they are in Christ. But they must beware of trying to live sometimes as if they were 'in themselves' and sometimes 'in Christ Jesus'. The whole life of the Christian, every moment of it, is 'in Christ Jesus'.

There is no exact parallel to this expression, but there are others not wholly unlike it. In writing to Philemon (v. 16) he refers to Onesimus as now 'a brother beloved . . . both in the flesh and in the Lord'. There is the same line of thought in Colossians in the third chapter: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God'. The whole massive argument of Ephesians 2:11ff. is the same. The truth about themselves being what it is, God having made this difference in Christ, Christians must not behave as if it had never happened.

That, I believe, is the true meaning of this verse in Philipians. They are 'in Christ Jesus'. They themselves recognize this to be true and, at times, expect from themselves thought and conduct 'in Christ Jesus'. But too easily over large areas of their lives they assume that they can live much like everyone else, as if they were men and nothing more, as if the new creation had never taken place (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). St. Paul will have none of it. God has 'quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:5f). For this reason, and for this reason only, the demands of the first four verses of this second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians are not, as by all human standards they must appear, fantastically impracticable, but the only standards for Christians, at every time and in every place. But they are much more than standards. They are 'in Christ Jesus' possible.



In Buddhism 'death' is a final category. It is the certain experience of man, the one dependable reality which is independent of man. The Kammic situation, therefore, is seen as a circle and a cycle revolving round and round the fact of death, man's true freedom being achieved when he has escaped from this situation.

In Christianity, on the other hand, the final category is life and not death, with the result that the human situation is not seen as a circle or cycle but rather as an ascending spiral, man achieving his destiny as he is able to co-operate freely in God's progressive purpose for his world. The Buddhist talks of Sansara, life's meaningless round; the Christian speaks of the Kingdom of God, life's meaningful ascent.

Book Reviews

The Church of South India (the Movement towards Union, 1900-1947): by Bengt Sundkler. Lutterworth Press, London (1953). Agents in India: The Christian Literature Society, Post Box 501, Madras 3. Price Rs.12.

This book gives, as the sub-title shows, a history of the 'Movement towards Union' which resulted in the formation of the Church of South India. The author is eminently qualified to write such a book as this; he is the Professor of Missions, Uppsala University, Sweden, and late Research Secretary, International Missionary Council. Being a member of the Church of Sweden, he writes the book not only 'from outside South India but also from outside any of the Churches which took part in the union negotiations'. As such, he claims to have begun his study 'without any conscious bias'. We feel that the book has amply substantiated this claim. It is as objective and sympathetic a study as one can expect.

The book begins with a careful *resumé* of the nineteenth century background, and then goes on to deal with the Rise of the South India United Church and the Faith and Order discussions after Edinburgh (1910). From Chapter VI onwards the author takes up the Tranquebar discussions and the various difficult and intricate yet thrilling stages of the negotiations towards Union. The chapter on the 'Historic Episcopate and Equal Ministry' is particularly clear and brilliant. Finally it ends with the Inauguration of the Church of South India and an Epilogue.

There is no doubt that Professor Sundkler has taken a great deal of pains in getting at and arranging facts in their true perspective, as the comprehensive bibliography and the copious notes on each chapter will show. His approach is scholarly, objective, yet sympathetic. The author has done a great service to the Church of South India and the Church as a whole by such an unbiased, careful and painstaking study. This book is essential to any student of Church Union Schemes. It is not merely an historical narrative. The theological issues involved in the Union have been discussed by the author with great ability and clarity. At the same time he is not lacking in charity. The differing viewpoints have been presented with great skill and impartiality. Hence even if the book deals with past history, the issues involved are ever present and vital. This makes the book useful and interesting even now.

The most striking impression on reading it is the wondrous way in which the Holy Spirit has ruled and directed the wills of men who were open to His guidance. Speaking of the day of Inauguration, the author says, 'History was present that day, to be sure, because history had of necessity played a fundamental rôle in shaping the Church'. If we substitute 'Holy Spirit' for 'History' in this sentence, it gives us the gist of the history of the Church of South India.

The price of Rs.12 is beyond the reach of the average Indian Christian reader. But when one considers the time and energy that has been put into this work by Professor Sundkler as well as the present cost of production of a book containing 457 pages—it is not too much. But we hope a cheaper edition will be available soon.

We strongly commend this thorough, well-documented and scholarly book of Professor Sundkler to all who are interested in Church History and Schemes of Church Union.

Nagpur

A. E. D. FREDERICK

Christianity in the Indian Crucible: Dr. Eddy Asirvatham. Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, Calcutta: Second and Revised Edition, 1957. Pp. xvi + 274. Price Rs.4/00.

This book grew out of lectures that the author gave to theological students in Boston University, and while there is much that an Indian Christian can and needs to learn from it, it is obvious to the careful reader that the constituency addressed is in the main non-Indian (e.g. 'At home' on p. 66 means the West; statements about money are more often made in dollars than in rupees). It will help the foreign reader to understand not only the condition of the Indian Church, but also a great deal of the political and social situation in India. It will help the Indian reader, especially the Indian Christian, to understand the problems that face the Church as well as its own strength and weaknesses.

The first chapter on 'the Indian Scene' is a masterly summary of the history of the subcontinent for the last decade. It is perhaps unavoidable that because of the constant changes in the situation some of the details are already out of date. The Niyogi report which was very much in the public eye a year ago seems to be almost forgotten and the twenty-five pages that the author devotes to it may appear disproportionate. But the lessons, direct and indirect, that are drawn from that report are still mostly valid.

The rest of the book is more directly concerned with the Indian Church, particularly the non-Roman section of it. Dr. Asirvatham shows no blind optimism regarding the future, nor gives an unqualified defence of the *status quo* in the Church. He is clear-sighted enough to see the weaknesses in, and the dangers that face, the Church and brave enough to point them out. He

is aware of the ignorant and foolish attitude of some of the Christians, Indian and foreign, towards Indian religions and culture. The unavoidable difference of opinion between a Christian who accepts Dr. Kraemer's position (in *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*) and a thoughtful Hindu is discussed, perhaps with more fairness to the Hindu than to Kraemer, and the following solution is suggested (p. 35): '... *That God reveals Himself to men of all climes and faiths is a fact so apparent, as to leave no grounds, or should leave no grounds, for disagreement. What He reveals is variously interpreted by all religions. It is in the latter field that the Christian missionary rightly labours, sowing what he interprets to be the content of God's revelation, i.e. the transformation of man from a natural to a spiritual being through Jesus Christ.*' It must be confessed that this conclusion does not carry us far, as the Hindu would find it difficult to concede that he is not already a spiritual being, and it would be a poor evangelist who sows what he interprets to be the content of God's revelation. Many who would wholeheartedly agree with the author in thinking that there is need for a deeper understanding of, and sympathy and respect for, the non-Christian religions would find it difficult to accept the suggestion (p. 45) that non-Christian antagonism to evangelism may be overcome by emphasizing 'Christian character, citizenship and stewardship *rather than Church membership*' (italics ours).

On the question whether India wants foreign missionaries, the author's answer is in the affirmative, but he sees need of a new type of missionary. Perhaps the sending churches have not yet sufficiently recognized the problems that arise because the missionaries come today to a relatively backward society from an environment that is industrially and economically advanced. This is a new element in the situation not paralleled in New Testament times or later, until the beginning of the modern missionary enterprise. Dr. Asirvatham rightly insists that changing conditions demand a new type of missionary, different both in training and attitude from the majority of those of the last generation.

The chapters on Rethinking Christian Theology, an Indigenous Christianity, and Indigenous Evangelism discuss a large number of questions very relevant to our times and open up a great many new avenues of thought and activity. In the last chapter on Dimensional Pioneering the author emphasizes the great need of Christian planning, initiative, and co-operation in the many new facets of social and political life in a country that is striving to become a welfare state. Dr. Asirvatham is a recognized sociologist and his analyses and suggestions deserve the respect and attention of all thoughtful Christians, Indian or foreign, who are interested in India. But the positive suggestions made regarding indigenous theology and evangelism are not original or convincing. Surprisingly little is said about the achievement and negotiations in the sphere of Church union.

There are a few minor misprints, but otherwise the printing and get-up are quite attractive, and the price is remarkably low.

Serampore

M. P. JOHN

The Gospel according to St. Mark : Introduction and Commentary by Geoffrey Paul. (Christian Students' Library, No. 13.) Rs.3/00.

This commentary is sure to prove extremely useful. It provides something not easily found elsewhere. We have our 'Jesus of History' commentaries of 40 years ago and our 'Form Criticism' commentaries of 25 years ago, each with their peculiar insights. But it has not been easy up till now to get a medium-sized, broadbased commentary on St. Mark, which combines former insights and is also a theological commentary in the deepest sense of the term. (A. M. Hunter's commentary in the S.C.M. Torch series has been the nearest approach, but was less full than this.)

The eschatological message of the Gospel is emphasized throughout. It is the Gospel of Messiahship. It proclaims Christ as Messiah, and as Beginner (also Perfecter) of the great revolutionary movement known as the Kingdom of God. It also proclaims the tremendous vocation of the Messianic Community, the Church. The relevance of this Gospel to the present world situation (and not least to the situation in Kerala, where the commentary was written) is stressed. The world wants a movement which knows what its end and goal is. It finds such a movement in communism. In fact, the Christian Church is also such a movement, if we would only realize it and hear anew the message of St. Mark to us.

This interpretation of the Gospel is of course in line with most modern study of the Gospel, which stresses how St. Mark saw the life of Christ as part of a cosmic struggle between God and Satan, and His miracles and exorcisms as part of a cosmic victory. (A struggle and victory which the Church, in Christ, is called to carry forward.)

Several points in the commentary attract special attention : — First, some good comments on the miracles, the knowledge of Jesus as Man, and the cry of dereliction . . . points at which some standard commentaries, with the tendency to arid analysis, have been at their weakest. But here there is a good mixture of theological, critical, devotional and homiletic comment. Second, there are some interesting imaginative reconstructions of Jesus' movements, e.g. His crossing and re-crossing of the lake after the feeding of the 5,000. Thirdly, the notes on chapter 13 are positive in tone. The apocalyptic sayings of our Lord are taken seriously. Attempts to 'explain them away' (including Jewish Christian Apocalypse theories) are fairly discussed but dismissed. The two sayings about the coming 'in this generation' and then

'no one knoweth' (Mark 13:30 and 32) are seen as giving a bifocal truth. Verse 30 is seen as Christ giving some sort of date, in order to teach the inevitability of the Kingdom's coming (and of the judgement upon the Jews) if the Church remains faithful and accepts suffering. Verse 32 is seen as Christ being reluctant to give a definite date, in order to teach that only God can finally bring in His Kingdom. There is nothing particularly new here in interpretation. (The old explanation in verse 30 of a 'prophetic foreshortening' comes to much the same thing.) But the application of this message is well brought out, and there is much thoughtful discussion on the Christian theology of time and history underlying these verses. On controversial matters, the commentary is never hesitant. The Feeding of the 4,000 is a doublet. The Last Supper is a Passover Meal. In the former instance however the case is put almost too strongly and one or two of the minor arguments adduced are of little value as evidence: e.g. to say that the second Feeding is absent in Luke and John proves nothing, for of course Luke omits the whole block of five Marcan miracles in Mark 6:45 to 8:26, and 'omission' by John is common throughout.

There are, however, certain points which one would like to see rectified in any further edition of this volume. First, the long section in the Introduction on 'The Eschatology of St. Mark's Gospel' (which is additional to much eschatological material elsewhere in the Introduction) should be much shorter or should be placed in an appendix. It covers much the same ground as the commentary on chapter 13 and does not seem at all suitable as it stands. Secondly, the section on the 'Son of Man' might be re-drafted. At the beginning of the section we read, 'We should not think that the phrase "Son of Man" refers to the humanity of Christ as contrasted with His godhead'. At the end of the section we find 'It seems likely that Jesus was glad to use this phrase with its emphasis on manhood, to show His solidarity with humanity . . .' As here expressed, this is confusing. Thirdly, since this is a Christian Students' Library volume, certain unnecessary technical words and phrases might well be removed: e.g. 'denouement' (p. 7), 'ad loc.' (p. 21), and 'premisses' (p. 146). Which leads us on to a final and inevitable question about the book as a whole: 'Is this good commentary really simple enough for the L.Th. level?'

Calcutta

CECIL HARGREAVES

The First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians: by W. B. Harris. The Christian Students' Library. Rs.3/00.

(Obtainable from the Christian Literature Society, P.B. 501, Park Town, Madras 3.)

This book is published under the Biblical section of the Christian Students' Library series, sponsored by the Senate of

Serampore College. It is written specially for men of the L.Th. grade of training ; and the Acting General Editor has correctly commented, in the Foreword to the book, that ' Mr. Harris' experience of teaching men of L.Th. grade in Tamil, fits him for the writing of a book such as this '.

The two most remarkable features of this book are its simplicity of language and its clarity of thought. In the Introduction the author deals with the background of the Corinthian Church, the circumstances in which St. Paul wrote this letter, and the theology of the epistle. In the section on theology, great themes like God, Man, Sin, Redemption, the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments, the Christian Life and Eschatology are dealt with ; the author quotes the epistle at length in support of his arguments and thereby shows his deep knowledge of the epistle and its contents.

The text and commentary form the next section of the book. This is an epistle which contains many problems. Mr. Harris has attempted and succeeded in giving all the possible shades of meanings of and opinions on these difficult problems ; in nearly every case he has given his own opinion and thus helps the reader to make up his own mind about them. The textual difficulties in the epistle are also discussed.

In the Additional Notes the author deals with six topics which require special consideration, for example St. Paul's teaching about marriage and women, and speaking with tongues. He has added a chapter under the title *Some Thoughts on the Message of the Epistle to us today*. It is evident that throughout the whole of the book Mr. Harris has been very conscious of the fact that he has been writing this for Indian Christians in their own setting. In this last chapter he has taken extra care to apply the message of the epistle to the particular situation in which the Church in India is placed today. The usefulness of the chapter has been enhanced by his rich experience of teaching and his close contact with the Indian Church.

The books in the Christian Students' Library series are intended to be translated into the Indian languages ; translation has however its own disadvantages. Therefore one hopes that Indian Christians, who are in every sense one with the situation in which the Church in India is placed, and also with its peculiar problems, may be able to produce books like this. Mr. Harris' effort should inspire many to take up the task of interpreting the Bible and its truths in the language and thought-forms of the people of India.

Serampore

JACOB VERGHIS

Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting: by Rudolf Bultmann. Translated by the Revd. R. H. Fuller. Thomas and Hudson. 18s.

In this book Prof. Bultmann deals in a most refreshing and revealing way with the historical antecedents of primitive Christianity. By interpreting Christianity against the background of its environment the author helps us to see primitive Christianity in the context of Hebrew Religion, Judaism, Hellenistic paganism and the Graeco-Oriental mystery religions. Such an interpretative study is indeed a great opportunity for Christian apologetics, for the study of comparative religion, for the establishment of the uniqueness of Christianity and for explaining the reasons for the ultimate triumph of Christianity over the rival religions and philosophies in the Graeco-Roman world. But the author makes it quite clear that his aim and purpose in this book has nothing to do with these for his aim is to evaluate the understanding of human life as enshrined in primitive Christianity.

In order to do this he deals briefly with the Old Testament Heritage, Judaism, the Message of Jesus and the development of Greek ideas from the earliest period down to the time of the mystery religions and Gnosticism. In the last section of the book, under the title *Primitive Christianity*, the author deals with three questions: 1. Is Christianity really a syncretistic religion? 2. Is there a fundamental unity behind all this diversity? 3. Does Christianity contain a single, new and unique doctrine of human existence? In answering these questions he relies chiefly on the Pauline and Johannine writings because to him these 'provide the clearest evidence for the Christian attitude to existence'. The essence of human existence according to him is 'Freedom from the past, and openness for the future'.

This book ought to be commended enthusiastically for it provides a great stimulation to Christian thinking, particularly in our country, not so much in the answers given but in the fundamental questions raised by the author. For those who want to discuss fully the Greek influence and the influence of Gnostic speculation on Christianity this book provides an exciting introduction. Those who uncritically maintain that the life and teaching of our Lord played a far more decisive and determinative part in the life and teaching of the Early Church than Hellenism or the mystery cults will be greatly helped by this book towards the understanding of the effect of environment on Primitive Christianity and the effect of Primitive Christianity on its environment.

Calcutta

B. MANUEL

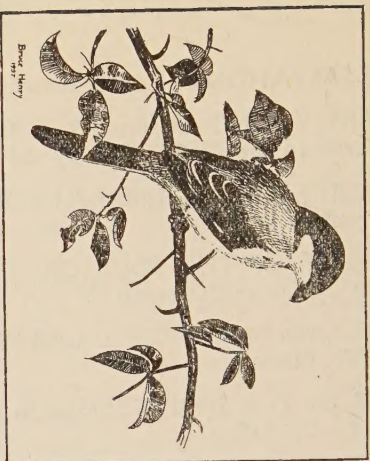
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